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DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: FORMER ASSEMBLY MEMBER ON PDP, AC, CIVIL SOCIETY

Classified By: CDA Robert Gribbin for reasons 1.4 (b & d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Usman Bugaje, former Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and political adviser to former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, contended that PDP "apostates" like himself will refuse overtures to re-join the party so long as Obasanjo remains at the party's helm. Those who have returned to the PDP, Bugaje asserted, carry no weight and merely desire political relevance. The devolution to a one-party state, Bugaje fears, may come to fruition if the AC -- which he opines remains the only viable opposition in the country -- cannot remain formidable and united. Bugaje told PolOff that he considers Yar'Adua vindictive, lacking in integrity, and power hungry. Bugaje averred that seeking redress through the tribunal process is futile and, therefore, insists the key is civil society engagement in the electoral process. END SUMMARY.

VIEWS ON PDP RECONCILIATION, UNITY GOVERNMENT

12. (C) Usman Bugaje, former Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and political adviser to former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, discussed with PolOff on August 17 his views on People's Democratic Party (PDP) reconciliation efforts and his likely takeover as the Action Congress (AC) National Secretary. Bugaje equated accepting offers to join Yar'Adua's unity government with joining the PDP -- a proposition he categorically rejects. Bugaje contended that "lots of people were left in the cold" by Obasanjo and that self-avowed PDP "apostates" like himself would not entertain returning so long as Obasanjo remains at the party's helm. He maintained that the antipathy toward efforts to bring PDP founders who have left the party (Group of 34 or G-34) back into the fold stems from resentment toward Obasanjo, who, despite having "had no hand" in the party's inception, drove out founding PDP members who opposed him. Those few members who have returned to the PDP such as Abubakar Rimi, Bugaje declared, carry no weight in Nigerian politics and merely desire political relevance.

13. (C) Rebuffing reconciliation overtures by the PDP, Bugaje believed, ensures that an opposition endures in Nigeria. Nigeria may become a one-party state, Bugaje fears, if the AC -- which he opines remains the only viable opposition party in the country -- cannot remain formidable and united. Bugaje noted that former AC National Secretary Bashir Dalhatu was forced to resign from the party over his dissatisfaction with the AC's refusal to join Yar'Adua's unity government.

Bugaje speculated that Yar'Adua offered his sister in marriage to Dalhatu in exchange for recognition of his presidency. Bugaje also believed that Dalhatu is jockeying for a high-level position in the unity government. Bugaje told PolOff that Atiku personally entreated him to take over as AC National Secretary. While he is keeping his options open, Bugaje is strongly considering Atiku's offer.

¶4. (C) With regard to the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), Bugaje believed a segment of the ANPP leadership capitulated to calls for Yar'Adua's unity government in order to gain an avenue for political participation. The erstwhile alliance between the ANPP and Muhammadu Buhari served concerted political interests, but never represented a long-term partnership, Bugaje opined. That factions within the ANPP emerged to marginalize Buhari, Bugaje averred, was foreseeable and inevitable given that the PDP "planted its folks at the ANPP secretarial level." In the absence of political savvy, Bugaje asserted, "Buhari neither saw this coming nor understood" its significance at the time.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: On August 20, Atiku spokesman Garba Shehu told PolOff that Bugaje had accepted Atiku's offer to assume the role of AC National Secretary and that the ball was already rolling on getting buy-in from other AC leadership. When asked why Bugaje was sought out in particular, Shehu intimated that Atiku has ambitions for 2011 and wants to exploit Bugaje's connection to civil society. Shehu also believes that Bugaje is loyal, intelligent, and committed. An adroit politician, who represented northern Muslim intellectuals as part of the Group of 34 Nigerians (G-34), Bugaje has skillfully crafted his political allegiances over the years. Bugaje's repudiation of the PDP's efforts to reintegrate founding members, and his commitment to the AC, indicate not only political pragmatism but also his own desire to mold and maneuver the opposition with an eye to 2011. END COMMENT.

CIVIC DISENGAGEMENT PERMITS COMPLACENCY, ABUSE

¶6. (C) Bugaje averred that seeking redress through the tribunal process is futile since outcomes are pre-determined. Even though the "whole world knows the elections were flawed, a court will always uphold them," he told PolOff. (Note: Bugaje informed PolOff that he is working to convince the ANPP in Katsina to drop its tribunal case against Katsina Governor-elect Ibrahim Shema (PDP).) Instead, Bugaje insisted the key is civil society engagement in the electoral process. Bugaje advocates a space for civil society to become enfranchised and invested in the political process. He observed that fraudulent elections were allowed to occur because civil society lacked awareness of citizens' rights, rule of law, and civic engagement in the electoral process. Toward that end, Bugaje seeks to educate voters on their constitutional rights in order to encourage them to hold their elected officials accountable for good governance. The danger of civic disengagement, Bugaje noted, is that it permits complacency and abuse of citizens' rights.

¶7. (SBU) Additionally, Bugaje informed PolOff that he hopes to establish a democracy institute to document the achievements and failures of the Obasanjo administration. While excoriating Obasanjo for his perceived corrupt practices, Bugaje strongly believes that the former president also instituted policies that cultivated good governance and respect for human rights. Further, Bugaje is re-focusing the efforts of the National Development Project (NDP), a non-governmental organization founded in 2001 to support the office of then-Vice President Atiku, to monitor and assess Yar'Adua's macro- and micro- economic policies over the next four years and provide recommendations.

VIEWS ON YAR'ADUA

¶8. (C) Bugaje told PolOff that he knows President Yar'Adua well -- they were classmates at Ahmadu Bello University in

the 1970s and maintained informal contact over the years. Bugaje maintained that Yar'Adua has always craved power, though he appears less ruthless than Obasanjo. Given his poor health, Bugaje believes Yar'Adua cannot handle the stress of the presidency and will, therefore, need assistance and trusted advisors to run the affairs of the country. Bugaje deemed Yar'Adua vindictive, weak in restraining others around him, and lacking in integrity. He expects the First Lady, Turai Yar'Adua, to figure significantly in presidential decision-making.

BUGAJE BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

¶9. (SBU) Dr. Usman Bugaje served as Vice President Atiku Abubakar's political adviser from 1999-2002 and in 2001, served as the Presidential Special Coordinator for Darfur. In 2003, Bugaje was elected to the Nigerian House of Representatives, where he served as Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Frustrated by the lack of internal democracy in the PDP under the stewardship of Obasanjo, Bugaje joined the AC, came out against Obasanjo's third-term agenda, and supported Atiku's presidential aspirations in ¶2007. Bugaje was the AC gubernatorial candidate for Katsina state in 2007. Born in 1951 in Katsina, Bugaje received his B.Sc. Pharmacy at Ahmadu Bello University in 1975. In 1991, he completed a doctorate in Islamic History at the University of Khartoum in Sudan. From 1991-95, he served as Secretary General of the Islam in Africa Organization. He is fluent in Hausa, English, and Arabic.

¶10. (C) COMMENT: Clearly, Usman Bugaje is a man of ideas. In contrast to most Nigerian politicians, Bugaje appears erudite and articulate. His emphasis on a bottom-up approach to reform, which though novel in the Nigerian context, remains idealistic. Interestingly, Bugaje suffuses democratic ideals with a moderate variant of political Islam; he views a place for Islam in the political framework of the Nigerian polity. The more intellectual slant to his political discourse is noteworthy and exceptional, as few other Nigerian Muslim thinkers have broached seriously the potential for political Islam in Nigeria. END COMMENT.
GRIBBIN